Never Touch a Predator's Prey

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Never Touch a Predator's Prey

by Aerosol

Summary

Will has never been quite fond of social contact neither did he ever like to be surrounded by people of the high society. But if your boyfriend is Hannibal Lecter, you sometimes have to take part in special events like an opera whether you want it or not. Nevertheless, Will is bored to death, but when he incidentally meets Frederick Chilton, he finds himself in an odd situation sooner than he might have thought. When Hannibal finds out he is not very pleased.

Notes

Well, hello to all dear readers out there :)

This OS plays in the time frame of the first season. However, there is a bit of CHANGE here (which is why I must warn of AU events and developments) :

Chilton was indeed already * punished by Gideon *, but in this case his wound has healed well, so he can go without problems and does need no stick to a diet - even his psyche has not suffered too much from this incident, at least he does not show it publicly.

Hannibal, in contrast to the original plot of the series, has revealed Will's encephalitis shortly after the profiler has lead Gideon to his house, so Will does not suffer from the consequences thereof, which have been eradicated in the early stage.

English is not my first language. Despite that I hope you won’t find many (or any) grammatical mistakes in here^^

Chapter 1

“You know Hannibal for quite some time now, right?"

Will stared into the light brown liquid sloshed in his champagne glass as he was hypnotized by it. If he picked it up at the right angle, it threw harmless waves, hights covered with gold foam. He was fascinated by this little performance, at least so much he easily forgot to answer the question of the lady standing in front of him. Only when she sniped energetically (but of course no less elegant) with her manicured fingernails in front of his face, the metallic tinkling of her silvery bangles brought him back to reality. And to his own chagrin the reality expressed itself in being kidnapped by Hannibal Lecter to a three-hour lasting opera, and afterwards being dragged to the following reception (without Will’s personal consent).

That fine gentleman, however, had merged with the opaque mass of black suits, intricately knotted ties and outrageously expensive cocktail dresses one hour ago and seemed nowhere to be found, such as Will suggested sullenly. In his mind he called the crowd a gathered receipt of two-legged penguins and mockingbirds and felt the urgent need to solve the knot of his own ocean blue tie (*The color suits your eyes*. Dr. Lecter said), for it terribly pressed on his adam's apple now and he sincerely believed the supply of oxygen in the room would get thinner and thinner because it was swallowed hungrily by the aristocratic bigotry.

"Will, my dear, are you not well? You look a little pale."

Will blinked. Once, twice. *Concentrate*, he told himself silently.

"Sorry, I was ... in thought." he replied with a well-tempered mix of human, remorseful warmth and coolness, "How was your question again?"

He could have asked for her name as well for he had forgotten it too, but he didn't want to embarrass himself even more than he had already done. Despite he was usually afraid of the company of foreign people, at least he was willing to give the smallest impression of sympathy when it was needed.
Fortunately, the lady seemed to be of forgiving nature. She conjured up a benevolent (albeit superficial) smile on her generous red painted lips. Will estimated her age roughly in the range between forty and fifty, her surgically fixed nose almost six years old and her unnaturally plump breasts resting on her chest in the twenties, maybe.

“Oh that’s fine. You don't have to apologize." she said. "Monique Borelli’s singing shakes every visitor in a different way. Her seducing voice implies dreaming very often."

She patted Will’s arm in a good-natured way. For his taste this touch took a whole second too long to be only evaluated on the basis of politeness, but he omitted comments. Oh, the profiler’s burden. There was no breath, no look and no gesture he didn't try to analyze,

whether intended or not. He just hoped she hadn't pushed somebody down the stairs or dipped a deadly pinch of cyanide into someone’s morning brunch, otherwise he would soon see much more than the corrections plastic surgery had made on her. Something he was definitely NOT looking for this evening.

"I was wondering how long you and Hannibal know each other." the lady earned him (*Her name begins with P. P as penetrance.* Will believed) into memory gently.

"Oh, we met a few months ago. I am one of his patients."

"Patient?"

The lady raised one of her russet, plucked eyebrows in surprise. *The brows are dyed to veneer the grey* Will recognized. *She tries to hide her true age. Vanity*.

"You seem surprised." he said, wondering, whether his honesty had been a mistake.

Meanwhile the delicate wave transitions in his champagne glass had transformed into a yellow swirling vortex, ate a black hole into the bottom of the glass. Whether this was one of his hallucinations or not he didn't know. He just wished to be able maintaining the outer facade of the quiet, slightly spaced-out gentleman, still overflown from the previous singing. At least until Hannibal decided to redeem him from this torment.
The lady (*Her name is Penelope. Penelope.. Penelope, the penetrating*) shook her head, smiling. Shoulder-length, straight hair flowed over her Malibu – tanned shoulders like a sparkling torrent in sunny June.

"Well, it's rare that Hannibal combines his profession with his private affairs. Eventually he follows the ethical principle to refrain from closer relationships with patients strictly." she said, eyes narrowed to calculating slits.
She seemed amused. Slobbering. Why, was a mystery to Will, but he felt no nice speculation hidden behind it. "I guess the exception proves the rule. And you seem to be a worthwhile exception to me... I can imagine you arousing one's interest in different ways."
She licked her lips as her gaze slid lengthwise over Wills body, constrained in a fine jacket revealing more of its original form, than Will would have cared for. He couldn't place whether the unmistakable hunger in her eyes happened consciously or unconsciously. In fact, he didn't want to find out, either.

What he wanted instead was to call a taxi and and leave this room with all those superficial people draped with their sparkling beaded necklaces and voices, playing with mocking politeness behind him (Hannibal had insisted to drive them to this event in his own car, which Will finally gave in, for he found no formative arguments against it). He wanted to go home to his stray-herd, wanted to go into the woods, even if he hadn't done this for weeks because he feared to encounter the deer out of his hallucinations. He had never suffered from claustrophobia, but he also wasn't used to be surrounded by so many people in a confined place for such a long time. The unusual had always been a double-edged sword in his life. He could almost see it swinging over his head.

He watched as the lady painted her lush lips into a narrow gap to set them to speak again, when all of a sudden Dr. Chilton showed up behind her. He had Will recognized first for he nodded as he joined them. Will had been conceivably little to do with Dr. Chilton before and he hadn't felt real sympathy for him either - but at this moment the psychiatrist could have arrived with a skull on his shoulders and galloping on a burning horse, Will hadn't minded. He was considered to be his proverbial savior in need.

"Will! What a surprise to see you here." Dr. Chilton greeted with a shallow smile, crowded to the side of Penelope with furious self-evidence, so that he moved directly into Will's immediate field of vision.

He had his hair slicked back and covered with a few drops of gel, so it held a dark shine in the warm light of the crystal chandelier. He wore a bespoke suit made of anthracite gray fabric. Ruby red brass buttons shone on his chest and matched the carbon black velvet bow tie perfectly, hooping his neck like a dog collar. His feet were put in mat black leather shoes and a silver Rolex flashed on his right wrist like a shining street sign. He looked more casually as Will had met him in his office, but this impression might be produced from wine consumption. Nevertheless, he seemed genuinely pleased to meet the profiler. Will straightened his shoulders, forcing himself alike to let his mouth curve into the vertical direction.

“Well, my presence seems to be incomprehensible to many people here." he said dryly, knowing all to well that he took a little verbal jab at the lady with her treacherous eyes, but in this second he couldn't care less. Penelope, however, scarcely reacted to it. Only the fact that her neatly curved mouth pressed into a clammy, implacable bar, betrayed her true emotional state. Perhaps this change was also given due Chilton himself, who stood like a statue between them and probably disabled Penelope’s own idea of progress this conversation should have taken before. Ultimately, it made her turn her head in the opposite direction and eject a contrived “*Oh”*.

"*Oh*, my dear sister seems to have arrived just now. Excuse me, please."

And even before the syllables were completely jumped down from her lips, she had already escaped the male domain and, almost headlong, plunged into a fringe group merged with the cheerful chatting participants and their informal posture . Will looked at Chilton. Chilton looked back. He raised an eyebrow.

"Penelope Hilton doesn't have a sister. She's a singleton." he said then, shrugging and telling exactly what Will thought.
He only nodded and allowed himself to breathe easier. Penelope-the-pushy-penetrance would probably not bother him for the rest of the evening. For this, the presence of a fairly familiar face made him feel more comfortable. He led his champagne glass as a dumb triumph to his lips.

"I assume you scared her with your appearance, Dr. Chilton."

Chilton looked genuinely affected.

"Oh my, I did not intend to. I'm Sorry."

"Don’t you dare." Will said and this time his grin was not forced but happy. He felt relieved. "You saved my life. Would I be the Little Red Riding Hood, I would have thrown my arms around your neck now to thank you."

Will spoke with such deadly seriousness that it seduced Chilton to laugh and the embarrassed expression vanished from his brightening eyes.

"I would not have thought that a dramaturg hides in you. And a German fairy tale expert, too. But let me say choosing Penelope as the bad wolf seems a little excessive to me. Her neckline offers no teeth." he teased.
Will took it in stride. Probably it was the absence of Penelope in combination with the champagne, already moving in his blood like outburning flames, but for the first time this evening he felt good. And this feeling he wanted to savor as long as possible. Secretly he hoped, Hannibal would not catch him here talking and smiling to another man. His reaction could be offensive, he could understand the fact that he was not responsible for the good mood Will developed, wrong. But checking with a quick glance around the room he found Hannibal nowhere to be in reach.

Not yet. Accordingly, he took the risk without hesitation. The risk of experiencing pleasure in the company of other people than the psychiatrist.

"Grimm's fairy tales were thrown into my hands a few years ago, and for a while I found taste in these little stories. I have seen enough of this life to be sure that anywhere bad wolves can be lurking in the dark as in the spotlight. Even if they are wrapped in a dress of Versage and wear red nail polish. And wouldn't you fit into the role of the hunter exquisitely? You're a collector of psychological game trophies after all ... " he said.

During his speaking he observed any reaction that he could catch from Chilton. A frown maybe, or a nervous biting on his lower lip, an impatient rockers of the right leg, a hasty look at the pretty flashing clock. Nothing of such sort happened. Chilton kept his eyes fixed on him , entirely focused on his face and voice. A circumstance which Will not necessarily displeased, as he admitted secretely.

"I and the hunter?" Chilton’s voice grew a little bitter. He took a sip of his champagne to gain some time. His lips were wearing a wet sheen. Will thought it suited him. "Hmm, that's actually a paradox, when I think about what the hunter does to the wolf after its dinner ..."

He pointed out a ghostly motion with his right hand. A twitch in the direction of the center of his body, as he would wish to ensure instinctively that the seam adorning his stomach had not become loose so that his intestines feared to tumble out like dominoes, proposing the sound of a damp lump while they hit floor. Will recognized the gesture and regretted to have led their conversation into this direction immediatly.
He had not considered that Little Red Riding Hood could include black, mocking humor in connection with Chilton's traumatic experience with Gideon.

"I'm sorry." he said. "That ... was idiotic of me. It wasn't my purpose to offend you."

Chilton gave him an indefinable look, leading Will to take a big gulp of golden water and let it wash down his throat slowly. At least he acted busy, not showing the embarrassment he felt. They were an awkward silent for a while. Maybe seconds. Maybe a minute. Two. Staring in different directions. Then, suddenly, Chilton cleared his throat.

"Oh, don't you know the story of the Seven Little Goats? THIS story is far worse. In the end the wolf's abdomen is filled with stones and then sewn up for punishment. When he wants to drink at the river, the weight of his subsequent fate and he falls into the water, drowning miserably, followed by the stereotypical *If they are not dead they are still alive today*. "he said in a quiet voice.

He beckoned to a waiter, who balanced crab tarts on his tray. Chilton took two of them, biting heartily into the soft crust.
"Fairy tales are often quite cruel, don't you think?" he asked, chewing. Will believed the doctor sought to hide his nervousness with food. That was okay with him as long as Chilton didn't take one of his metaphors honestly bad. He couldn't bear any hostility this evening. Walking around a closed enclosure of greed forming carnivores, allies were far better than rivals.

"**Life** is cruel." yet he could not resist and said thus actually one of the basic attitudes, which he had discovered over the years, and most likely even in old age (if it should be for the privilege) bonds would. Because it was true. Because life was cruel indeed. Sometimes cruel and beautiful. And sometimes cruel only.

Chilton nodded, still chewing.

"True. Even in fairy tales people are confronted with murder. I mean, look at what Hansel and Gretel do with the *poor* old cannibal witch ... a nice role model for today's youth, "he said innocently and raised his arms in the air as if he had just proclaimed the end of the world.
He winked at Will openly. At that moment the profiler felt a tiny, minimal spark of sympathy blossoming in his chest. It was a shadowy feeling, the mere germ of a sensation, but it was *there*.
And because it was *there*, Will couldn't help but reply by infusing the look in his eyes with a little hint of human warmth despite how his introverted mind usually prevented it. Warmth, he otherwise reserved for special people. People whom he trusted. Persons who wouldn't be called Frederick Chilton in general.

Chilton seemed to notice the small change in Will's nature. He automatically leaned closer to him as he spoke. Bridged an invisible barrier, leaving a crack in the phantom skin. Will let him have his way and asked himself quietly *Why do I do this?* in thought.

"Listen, Will, I don't want to be rude by asking personal questions..." said Chilton then, drank the golden liquor in a single sip and placed it down con a table in their vicinity. "But may I assume that you and Dr. Lecter have a ... well, more intimate relationship, as it is common among clinicians and their patients?"

The question was unexpected. Which in turn meant that Will would have expected it from a

caliber like Penelope, but not from Chilton. He rested his forehead in first, suspicious wrinkles. Approaching his mental shield folded back on like sunshades on a brazilian morning in May.

"What makes you say that?"

Chilton leaned his eyelids down. His mouth was expressed as pastel white crescent in his skin.

"Well, I'm a little bit familiar with Dr. Lecter – Hannibal's ... behavioral patterns. He chose you as his accompany for this public presentation, so he probably wants you to be seen with him - The rumor mill is likely to boost about you two. A provocative step, considering the many photographers and the associated press. He must consider you as a very special personality. Did you know that Hannibal enjoys the company of other individuals rarely for some months? Especially the participation of such events, he seems to have become weary of them. He barely attended."

Oh, Will knew. He knew Hannibal private visits were only reserved to very few people. People from whom he suspected either that they still might be useful to him later or those with whom he wanted to share their acquaintance for far simpler reasons. People like Jack Crawford or Alana Bloom. People like Abigail. People like him.
Nevertheless, he bowed his head gently to one side and squinted a smile to Chilton.

"Except for opera." he said kindly.

Chilton nodded mechanically.

"Yes, he has never been able to resist operas." An amused twinkle showed in his eyes. "Hm, do you have a nice singing voice, Will? I'd never offend you, but the motif of a bird singing in its golden cage flatters you."

Will laughed. In fact, this comparison kept an ominous truth as he admitted silently. He waved his hand as if he would shoo an annoying fly.

"No wrong conclusions, doctor." He said. "I'm a terrible singer. I can't hold a single note."

"But you certainly have other irritant gifts."

Chilton's eyes darted to the location of the orchestra, which started a new piece. A breath later, the air was engaged in a heavy breeze of classical music. The heartbreaking sound of sweet violins filled the room, biting into the ears of the visitors softly, leaving pale pink love marks. Will realized the change in the atmosphere even more, for he was captured by it himself.
He wasn't versed in the musical impulses of earlier centuries, but he gradually began to understand why they were so appreciated and used as tribal traditions, distributed with devotion.

"From whom is this?" Will asked quietly. Too soft.

"Vivaldi." it shot back and Will was secretly terrified to death. He hadn't cared if anyone heard him. But Chilton seemed to have good ears. "From his work *Four Seasons*." the man continued without batting an eyelash. "I'm a little rusty in musical terms, but I could swear they play the part of *Spring*. Personally, I prefer the *Winter*, but you should be satisfied with what you get, right?"

Will didn't answer.

"In terms of seasons, autumn is my clear favorite." he said after careful consideration. He felt like his heart throbbed against his chest while the music around him hummed through his bones with every passing second. "Of course it's still nice. The music, I mean." he added hastily, as if he were afraid to leave the wrong impression. For the sake of truth he did that often, but it happened less often than he knew.

Chilton plucked an invisible fluff from his right sleeve. "As a matter of fact." he muttered. He seemed thoughtful. Then he turned his head abruptly at Will, grinning like a maniac. Will was already beginning to occur taking a step backwards for his own safety as the therapist swung to a slight bow and held out an open palm. Will stared at it as passers-by would have been staring at a grenade, camouflaged as plug-rose. He was confused. Chilton took it calmly, with almost uncanny patience.
"So, can I have this dance? The music is too enchanting to endure it standing on one spot." he helped the profiler along. But it left Will just more confused. Irritated.

"Dancing? With me? But we..." He looked around as if he feared the chatting crowd would realize their conversation and establish cross-connections that shouldn't be linked. "We're both men."

Chilton shrugged.

"This is the 21st century, so it wouldn't be a scandal anymore." he replied. "However, if the audience makes you uncomfortable, we are free to use the balcony terrace."

He pointed with a look to the adjacent balcony, which was located on the other side of the room and could be reached through a wall-sized glass door. Will hesitated. Suddenly he heard his blood pumping faster through his veins. His hands began to sweat. He wiped them on his jacket as unobtrusive as possible.

"I cannot dance." he said dismissively. That wasn't a lie, but not the main reason why he refused. Chilton didn't seem convinced.

"I can teach you." he said unimpressed, his hand still reserved invitingly in Will's direction. The profiler feverishly searched for a better excuse.

"I don't know if Hannibal would be pleased ..." he began, but bit his tongue in the midst of the sentence. Too late unfortunately. Chilton snorted in amusement.

"Oh, the rumors are true then." he said with a benevolent tone (it didn't need to be necessarily

annoyed but for Will it sounded wrong anyway). "Despite this I wouldn't have thought to be THAT serious already."

Will’s body stiffened.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

The mocking timbre in Chilton's baritone fueled his suspicions. The psychiatrist had, however, given up levitating his arm useless in the air and finally folded his hands behind his back. Now he was serious again and the light-hearted twinkle in his eyes had been replaced by a faint glow. A dark glow.

"Well, every partnership records a dominant and a passive carrier to maintain the equilibrium." He said in his professional manner. "It isn't difficult to guess that Hannibal isn't willing to give you a long leash in these points."

No long leash. This metaphor gave Will tweaking gripes, making him uncomfortable. In his home a pack of barking stray dogs loitered through the hallways, but he had never referred to himself being a dog too, never saw his person in such a subjugated role. He didn't like this idea. Probably because it contained more reality than he was able to admit now.

"So you say, Hannibal is uncertain?" he asked, the question echoing in his own ears to raise hollow humor. Chilton responded quite gently on the failed counterattack.

"Not uncertainty." he said with a soothing voice. "I type him more as the… **possessive** one. He may be a brilliant psychiatrist, but love makes the darkest sides in our minds raise their ugly heads. Feelings aren't easy to calculate neither to control."

He spoke the last words like an old man who endured too much experience and too much disappointment to sound more cheerful. Will thought Dr. Chilton didn't fit into the role of a happy family man. Also he could hardly imagine him as a husband or even a passionate lover. He was probably someone who they called married to his work. Suddenly, Will thought Chilton had to be very lonely when the prison psychiatric made his coarse in life and always circled around him like a sun in its own universe.
Realizing that Chilton spent days and nights in his office because there was no one who was waiting for him at him. Realizing, that the man before him, who used every available minute for studying his patients even when there were fresh threads woven on his abdomen, would surely not ask ANY man for a dance. Or to share closer body contact than usual.
Will didn't know why, but this fact gave him a strange form of security.

And this in turn gave him a jolt. His decision was as clear as it could get.

"Oh, for fuck’s sake. Come." he grumbled and grabbed Chilton on the wrist.

Without another word, he turned on his heel and headed for the terrace pulling Chilton with him.

"You've changed your mind?" the mild surprised man asked behind him. The right corner of

Will’s mouth lifted timidly.

"Let's say I'm my own master." he answered, but didn't look over his shoulder to encounter the penetrating gaze of the psychiatrist. Although he looked forward, he could practically paint Chilton’s cheeky grin in the air.

"That's good to hear." he heard him reverberating in his back. "But just so that no misunderstandings occur - **I** lead.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Hey :)

Thank you very much for 4 Kudos and 1 Bookmark. I hope you'll like this chapter as well.

Enjoy reading :)

¨ Place the left hand upon my shoulder and your right one into mine. ¨ Chilton ordered good-natured, as they stood on the terrace and the night wind sailed through their clothes and moist cold tugged at their hair.

Besides these two there was no one outside, which on one hand was a lucky pledge, on the other hand it had to do with the prevailing weather conditions. Will vaguely remembered to have heard about a thunderstorm in the car radio rolling over this night and instinctively blinked up to the ink black sky. No clouds. Only stars that clung on the dark like sugar crystals above their heads. So he pushed the thought about arriving disaster away quickly , dismembered it in unimportant scraps of paper, dissolving dusty into the maelstrom of oblivion. For the meantime, at least.
Will took a deep breath. Then he did as Chilton told him. Although his gaunt figure was shielding him from almost all environmental influences, a cool breeze managed to blow him right in the face, so he had to close his burning eyes. When he dared to open them again, Chilton's view networked seamlessly with his, holding him like a prisoner in his cell. Only then Will noticed Chilton had green eyes. Not really *green* eyes, but pale green, like jade, treated with little chips of blue topaz. However, Will was more interested in the incredible peace that lay in the iris of the other man. Will’s concerns about their dance, this childish *Sneaking out at night*, faded with each heartbeat he did in Chilton's presence.
He seemed to wear a truly strange expression on his face, because Chilton reflected his stare with suspicion.

¨ Will? Is everything alright? ¨

Will looked at him. He could hear no trace of the hustle and distant head of the madhouse in that voice. Only ... maybe a touch of humanity. Honest concern. Somehow this did not fit the man who had once persuaded Gideon to be the Chesapeake Ripper. Somehow Will was touched by this other version of Chilton. The pressure and warmth of their entwined hands flowed through his entire body, pumped up haltingly through his veins like the blood that hammered inside.

¨ It’s okay. I lack nothing. ¨ As he would try to proof his words, he put Chilton’s free arm around his waist. Although the fabric of his suit separated their bare skin in several layers it felt boiling hot. Like forged magma skinned naked meat. Will cleared his throat. ¨You asserted, Hannibal would be very possessive.¨he said in a husky voice. He swallowed to damp his dry throat with saliva, but it didn't help much. ¨And...suspicious.¨ he continued roughly, ¨Do you think he would be anxious about losing me to a rival? Do I seem to tend to infedelity in your opinion? ¨He put the sarcasm deliberately spare.

Chilton sighed as he carefully got used the profiler to the first steps of waltz. Back to the side. Left, right. To the rear, to the front. Rotation. The sequence repeated itself. In the third run, Will was already capable of leading his partner in a self-selected direction. The profiler smiled at his ridiculous triumph and found himself incredibly stupid. Oddly enough, he didn’t care about it in this moment. He blamed it on the champagne and the eardrum bursting performance of wonderful *Monique Borelli*.

The announcement of Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons' broke into hushed quality out of the ghostly silent darkness. Will did not mind. They did not move to the beat of this song anymore. The rhythm of their steps was based on a music without a name. A symphony without orchestra. The only sound similar to strings was the whistling tune of their breathing, the only bass was the wild beat of their delicate runaway pulse. Chilton led him, but where he led him and what he intended to do when they would arrive at their destination, remained a mystery. Will didn’t know whether Chilton brought him to an abyss or another plate of solid ground. He could even kill him right now, if he wanted to. A swift movement towards the balcony railing, an unexpected touch and a brutal fall, while the creme de la creme of the rich and famous inside the building ate their caviar and sipped at their glasses. Here, hidden in darkness, in a blind niche a murder, rape or other crimes could have been committed trouble-free .

Exactly when Will was fully aware of this possibility, Chilton pulled him into another rotation by surprise that ended with Will'sf ace staying a few centimeters in front of the psychiatrist’s and their chests gently collided with every taken breath. It happened quickly. They were so close Will could smell Chilton’s aftershave. A heavy, tart scent carried by pine needles and wet tree bark. Involuntarily Will opened his lips a crack and inhaled the bouqet. Chilton smelled like forest crowns after a hailstorm. To be true, Will had expected a more classical note, but he welcomed this rustical flair eagerly. The forest had always been both shelter and horror in his life. He combined good and bad memories with this nature. He had often dreamed about falling into a bottomless depth and being devoured by the shadows which were thrown on the rock walls in jagged hatches, while the moon paved the ground with its waxen light.

¨ Well, infidelity is such a nasty thing ... ¨ Chilton said at last, his eyes focused as ever on Will. His hot breath, mingled with tepid peppermint, tickled over Will's stubble and on the

bare skin in between. ¨ Cheating in a relationship can have very different reasons. Higher voltages occur over time and are discharged in dispute and physical aggression. Or one begins to live by each other and surrender to indifference. Or one wants to *consume* the partner with such force that it comes close to the process of slow, painful suffocation. Unfortunately I am not an expert on such things. ¨ The expression in his eyes transformed, became warmer. ¨ Anyway, I would neither stuck Hannibal in the first nor the second category. As a layman, the third variant appears to me as the most plausible. Your are desirable, you don't need to deny it, because it's true. Hannibal has recognized that. I'm sure it fits well on the fact that he doesn't want you to slip away from him so easily. He takes good care of you. And with good I mean **very** good. ¨

Will smiled.

¨ You overestimate my worth. ¨ he said, sounding quite lax even in his own ears. Nearly exhausted. He spoke with indulgence, as if one was clarifying a child about the fantastic cascade of Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. It was not honorable to hurl the truth in peoples' faces so relentlessly, even Justitia had no dagger hanging at her hip. But Will didn't want to behave honorably. He didn't fool himself, merely he protected his thoughts from disappointment that could have sprung out his own imagination. Nor did he want Chilton to have misconceptions about him. Thanks to Freddie Lounds' toxic nib the whole town already had misconceptions . So he would've been quite pleased if the headmaster of the asylum didn't yet classify himself under the fingers, indicating accusions at him and whispered rumors. Rumors of murder, blood and organs. Rumors of manslaughter and cover-up. Rumors of mental illness. Yes, the rumors about mental illness hurt him the most.

Will hadn't even noticed that he put his head down. Only when two fingers appeared under his chin and gently pushed it up a bit, he realized the fauxpas.

Understanding nested in Chilton's eyes. Painful great understanding. *Dangerous* Will thought to himself. *You should go, Will. Now. Get away before HE discovers you. How do you want him to explain all this, huh?*
Despite the admonitions of his inner voice, he didn't move from the spot. The fingers under his chin remained where they were and he relied on them on a trial basis, the silent question spelling out in his head whether he could trust them with the weight of his skull or not.

Apparently he could do that, because Chilton (*Frederick. Frederick for God's sake!),* held him. He felt his other hand on his back, rubbing circles into the smooth skin. When did these hands fall out from their common place? When did the profiler lose the control about their situation? Will didn't know. He was fascinated by his own ignorance. At the same time his unease grew anew.

¨ It would be a mistake to underestimate you. ¨ Chilton whispered calmly. His fingertips felt kind of rough and soft at the same time. ¨ Your psyche is ... remarkable. Unique. The empathy you incarnate to use your horrific visions is a personal burden. And how you deal with it is simply- ¨

"Do not entitle me as a saint, Chilton. " Will spoke softly but insistently. (If he had spoken louder, he probably hadn't been able to suppress the tremor in his voice). The hidden smile

on his mouth was frozen. ¨ Although I sometimes don't know who I am, I always know **what** I am. ¨ An indifference swung in his voice, which would have cast a shower of ice shards on the backs of current passing pedestrians. Chilton shook his head vigorously.

¨ I would never do such thing. You are a madman after all, but - ¨ Will snorted. But before he could escape Chilton's embrace indignantly, the other man dug his fingers into his clothes, clinging to the fine fabric like iron. ¨ - But the world is full of madmen, which is nowadays a common profession ¨ he continued pragmatically. ¨ The world itself is an insane Queen giving birth and death and we dig like bloodhounds in her guts. Thus, there are no more saints. They have diied and been regurgitated as plant fertilizer and pig feed long ago. ¨ The psychiatrist frowned. ¨ I didn't mean to offend you, Will. Really, I admire the resistance you maintain in spite of everything. ¨

Will lowered his gaze to the floor, still animated by frustration and volatile anger. He felt the force of the arm, which embraced him with a disciplined rigor that he had not expected. Felt foreign life flow through foreign veins. Felt the shaking pulse of a strange wrist on his right shoulder blade. The aroma of pine needles and hailstones intensified. If he concentrated, he could even taste it on his tongue. He did not like that. It reminded him of a dream in which he had been buried alive and woke up. The earth had surrounded him like wood brown lead, covered from head to toe. Maggots were crawling over his emaciated, bony body, insect larvae had spent the night in the holes of his shirt and the corridors of his tattered trousers. He had struggled gasping for breath, tried to scream, but it was only a croak that came from his throat.
A muffled, lifeless *Help*. And a name. A name.
It had been horrible.

Disgusted by his own memory Will's face screwed up to a horrified grimace. An image that Chilton recorded as reflection of his careless remark and the casual expression made his eyes completely blunt . Will realized that the atmosphere between them had cooled noticeably within a few breaths.

¨ *We dig like bloodhounds in her guts* - Very poetic.¨ he said disparagingly, referred to the *Queen of the World*. ¨ From which author have you stolen this phrase? Georg Büchner? Voltaire? *Shakespeare*? ¨.

He wanted to squirt no poison, really. But the fact that Chilton had called him a madman, was like a glowing arrow in his groin. It hurt him and the knowledge that this pain was even sort of a confidant to him, depressed him further. Again, clarity burned into his brain that everyone *he* knew and did not **know** *him* viewed him as crazy. Not believed him to be mentally healthy. He thought back to the time when Alana had rejected him because he had an unstable personality, so she preferred distance between them. He had actually wished for a short, defining moment to be dead. Not buried within the meaning of alive, but dead in the purest of all the senses. No longer present. Disappeared. Gone. Lost. Not that he had seriously considered suicide ... okay, maybe for the duration of the blink of an eye, yes, he had. Now this memory and the associated wound, crashed through Chilton's words (actually, only because one of his words) cheated on the thin-skinned fabric of his soul. He felt like a

house of cards collapsing by a careless breath of air. Again and again and again ... and again. He only knew one person who was allowed to sit next to him in such situations, helping him to rearrange the cards in rickety bridges. The man, whose name had been on his lips as he fantasized himself buried under two meters of rammed earth.

Will took a deep breath, let it out hissing between his teeth again. He looked at the broad front door, watching the flickering figures in the enlightened hall behind the milky glass squares. Some were so far away he could only imagine the colorful outline of their bodies. The hard contours of their faces melted with increasing distance to unprincipled schemes, giving them a blurred appearance. Will let his alert eyes restlessly wander through the sections of the room he was able to see. But Hannibal was nowhere to be found.

What if he forgot me? Maybe he drove home alone and has just left me here facing my fate a disgusting nasty voice snarled in his head, but he pushed her aside rudely, banished her into a gloomy chamber of his paper-thin heart.

But the need to see him, talk to him, to hear his voice, to be near him, remained. Was almost overpowering. Crumbled like fever in every pore and every fiber of his simmering body. He could free himself from Chilton's arms and wordlessly go back into the building. He could squeeze through the crowd and scan the whole hall after the psychiatrist. He could have even called after him.
Well, he did nothing. He was afraid. He felt *dependence*. Will was subordinate to be dependent, yet he refused to divulge it in public. It was unpleasant to him, reminded him of a fawn that had been separated from the herd and now cried for his mother. Hannibal was not his mother, and certainly not a father-substitute, but Will **needed** him as the fawn needed his mother. He began to feel incomplete when the psychiatrist was not with him. Kind of lost and broken. This certainty scared him, at the same time it struck him that another person had gained such an influence on him so quickly. Or interest.

Also Chilton seemed to have developed a special interest in him since the unpleasant incident with Gideon. At least the constant contact of his hands, although the dance had ended long ago, revealed this fact. They remained in their position like dislocated showmen, set in a frame from mosaic fragments of the night.

Chilton waited for Will to continue. When he didn't, remaining several minutes Like a notched marble statue in silence, he gave him an almost reproachful look.

¨ It’s mine. My view of the world. ¨ he said pointedly, seemed to be honestly offended . ¨ I never need to steal to express myself verbally. I abhor plagiarism. ¨

Will popped out of his thoughts how a whale swam to the water surface collecting oxygen in his truck – pumping fresh air unto his big lungs. He probed the situation with a view research before he turned back to the psychiatrist.

¨ Would you ever steal? ¨ he snapped suddenly. His cheeks had adopted a slightly reddish tinge. Individual strands of his hair stuck to his heated temples. Chilton raised an eyebrow.

¨ What? ¨ he asked perplexed. Will’s mouth thinned.

¨ Stealing. ¨ he repeated impatiently. ¨ Would you steal if there was something that you could not get in any other way? ¨

¨ I ... Um, when the insert would be worth it, then yes, probably. ¨

¨ What would be worth enough in your opinion? ¨ Will asked. He wanted to explore the basis of Chilton's interest. And a little interrogation had never harmed anyone.

To his mild surprise Chilton's shoulders sunk in result, did not resist. Similar to a boy, who had been caught by doing something forbidden.

¨ The question here is not what, but who, as you've already guessed. ¨ he said. His reply sounded strangely monotonous.

Will snorted.

¨ Guessing would be the wrong word. Fearing is more like it. ¨

The psychiatrist examined his view, but Will stubbornly focused on one of these ruby red jacket buttons. Red Red Little Red Riding Hood. Red like blood. Of course, red.

¨ You have asked me if you were prone to infidelity. ¨ it mumbled shortly afterwards so close to his ear he automatically jumped backwards. ¨ What if I could teach you infidelity, just how I taught you this waltz? Hannibal is a talented man, but I don't hink he's capable of being a trustful partner **and** a reliable therapist at the same time. ¨ Chilton licked his lips, unconsciously probably. Will watched it from the corner of his eye. A shiver raced across his upper arms.

At this moment raging thunder roared over the city. The windows of heaven opened. Pattering rain dived down and courted the two men in vibrant wetness. Will hardly noticed it, although the fabric of his suit soon slapped against his body hard and soaked. ¨ You know, Will, I would advise you to look for a new psychiatrist. ¨ Chilton said casually. ¨One who maintains a more platonic relationship with you.¨

The last sentence elicited Will to a humorless laugh.

¨ With you there is no platonic solution possible. ¨ he said. He was tired of the charade and Chilton recognized it.

¨ Not? ¨ he asked, seemed hardly surprised.

¨ You keep me in your arms for almost an hour. ¨ Will countered immediately, ignoring studiously that he estimated that hug more than he should. Extemporaneous sensations sought him home. An arbitrary longing for closeness.

¨ Then you've learned waltz AND smoochy dance. What's the matter? ¨ Chilton plucked a few beads of water from Will's rain-soaked hair as it would be the most natural thing in the

world. ¨ Have you not speculated about what this situation could amount? ¨ he asked. Wills throat was suddenly dry.

¨ I ... yes, but - ¨ he stuttered, paused himself, quarreled with his own words.

Chilton bent lower over him. His breath no longer smelled of peppermint, but after the bittersweet scent of withered roses.

¨ But? ¨ he breathed.

Will swallowed. His heart was beating in his throat, accompanying a familiar dizziness in his senses. *Please don't faint. Everything else, but now please don't faint, for heaven's sake!* his brain prayed manically to him and maybe there was a God somewhere, because for a change, his silent plea was heard. He did not know why his condition deteriorated so rapidly, thought of emotional stress because of the medication he took about four hours ag- wait. Will blinked with his inner eye that saw more than was good for him. No, he had not taken his medication. Hannibal had advised him against it. *You won't need them.* he had said, and presented this thin-lipped smile Will had loved in time and learned to associate with relaxation. *Now you got me ...*
So what? Are you my new drug now? Will had asked him then. He remembered this scene surprisingly well, which had happened mainly in the last half hour before they were driving to the opera house. Hannibal had widened his smile to at least an inch and born a twinkle in his eyes. *I'm whatever you need*. He approached to will with calm, balanced, confident steps and had let his large, strong hands and wrists floating in elevation to his face. First, Will had believed that the psychiatrist would stroke his fingers over his stubbled cheeks and kiss him. But Hannibal had only addressed the shirt collar of the profiler and pulled the knot of the tie tighter. Like a Jewish mother who had come to her pubescent teenage son for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah. Will had felt strangely helpless at that moment. Immature. He had added not a single word about this caring action. But when Hannibal wanted to remove his finger after his finished work, he had taken them and leaned the knuckles against his chest,watching them with cautious curiosity.

Hannibal had let him go, even after his eyes had been puzzled. *Finally, Dr. Lecter is merely human* Will's inner voice commented and Will himself had abdicated it with an equally inner nod. Hannibal's hands were disastrous cold as restructured with snow. He had learned many things about these hands thoroughly in the past few months, seen and paid attention to the surgical precision, they were capable of, how hard they could grab under given circumstances and how crazy this idea of heaven and hell really was, if the bedroom was in their reach. These hands were fatal. They were spotted by blood, skin and intestines. They were murder weapons, mechanized knives with a blunt blade. For Will, they were just beautiful. He would never have said it out loud, because many things sound stupid when they are not pronounced in the head, but he felt it. And he felt the expectant look of Hannibal, who focused on their clasped hands.

Will, is everything alright? Migraine again? the psychiatrist inquired. His voice was dark velvet, fed with objectivity and concern and subliminal, seething heat. Will shook his head in response.

It's nothing. I just ... these hands have people struck down like cattle, slaughtered, eviscerated and then served them as a dinner with wine and brittle. And now… they adjust my tie.

Somehow Will found this paradox hilarious. Histerically funny, to say at least. What a laugh.

Hannibal's eyes were fixed on him. He seemed highly concentrated.

Is that a problem? he had asked. (And oh, how **carefully** he had asked). Will had lifted his eyes and met him head-on. Deep, abysmal brown hypnotized him. Corrupted him. Ate him alive. Brought him down. But he fell for so long that he had forgotten it and mistook it with flying.

Sometimes the mind wants to warn us, but we stop it, because we cannot bear the understanding.

No. he said *No, quite the contrary ... I am grateful*.

Then he had led these (UGLY. Deadly. Disgraceful. Dangerous.) hands to his mouth without resistance and pressed his lips to their back. Only on one side, then on the other. These were powerful hands, indeed. Maybe they were even godlike hands. For like God, they killed for pleasure and will, like God they were capable of healing and tearing wounds, to destroy and to save lives. Despite all this, an imperceptible tremor shook him, possibly an electrical nerve impulse, as he balanced these oh-so-powerful hands for the duration of a wing beat, sharing a motion, a sign of weakness, of emotion, of sheer overpowering. After Will parted his lips from the strange, smooth skin he looked up to Hannibal how his true-hearted dogs would have looked up to him. Hannibal's striking profile was devoid of any emotion. Except for the eyes. Will looked at him. The expression in them was probably the only thing that had changed, but Will could not say in which category he should classify it with the best intentions. Although he sensed something familiar in it ...

Silently, he watched as Hannibal swallowed, focusing on the contraction of his Adam's apple, the creeping lifting his chest. He would have put his cheek t at this chest and listened happily to the drumming heartbeat under the cloak of cloth, flesh and bone. But that was a pipe dream for later night, because Hannibal continued to talk.

We have to go now, or we'll miss the beginning of the opera. It would be rude to be late. the psychiatrist announced (unusually stiff) and Will almost automatically breathed out an inarticulate sound, which could be called a grumbling murmur easily. But he finally nodded. He admitted defeat. His behavior was childish and he knew it, but somehow it didn’t seem to matter much, as soon as he thought of the opera and the three goddamn hours he would have to spend on his goddamn ass on a goddamn seat cushion. He called something like this *torture*. Hannibal called something like this *the higher echelons*. Then Will called him a *bourgeois* and Hannibal dubbed him simply as *philistine*. Thus, the balance between the two had been restored. In most cases, anyway.

When satisfied Hannibal turned his back and went down the hallway, Will had suddenly realized why the former expression had seemed so familiar to him.

The expression in Hannibal's eyes had been hungry. Unfolded, driven wild, hardly matched control hunger.

Will, are you coming? Hannibal called.

Will let out a small, secret sigh. Then he pursued Hannibal, with the knowledge that this hunger was not touched by sexual, but animal origin.

¨ You will only see a research object in me. ¨ he finally brought out in a husky voice. His mind reached the present again, found himself back on the balcony terrace and the rain with a psychiatrist who was not **his** psychiatrist. And suddenly he wondered how he had got into this scene. Why had he agreed to Chilton's proposal and embarked on the dance (he usually hated dancing)? What had led him to follow this man to a place off from the rest of the crowd? A place which would have been perfect for murder, rape, manslaughter and other obscenities?
When he saw Chilton's face, he knew it. The eyes. He had seen Chilton's eyes. Had been lulled in by all these feelings swirling in them. Had forgotten why he avoided eye contact strictly. And that had been a big mistake.

¨ I am a guinea pig. At most, a… pet. That’s all I’ll ever be for you. ¨ Even by his standards, his voice sounded shattered.

Chilton just stared at him. Not accusing, not malignant, not judgmental. His features were smoothed, his mouth a line, parted with a steady ruler. Will saw the pearly lips overrun by a bluish environment. For a split second he wondered if he should warm up those lips with a kiss and did nothing. Instead, he fell into the pool of blue-green irises and looked at his own reflection in shiny black pupils. It was this nothing, this absolute, holding Will captured as it could have done no material cage with iron bars and chained doors. But those eyes offered so much more. They offered openness, light and perhaps a place, related to an arc-shaped clearing in the center of deciduous trees. Or a still lake, where he could enjoy fishing and life in its purest form.

¨ Let's say, I would actually consider you to be a pet – which isn’t true after all. ¨ Chilton admitted, each syllable cold as frog spawn, ¨ What does Hannibal see in you then?

The question caught Will with the force of a wrecking ball swinging in his stomach. His eyes widened. Nausea surged in his gut and his brain.

¨ I ¨ ... he got out, but shocked he realized that he did not know how he should go on. He fumbled for words like a castaway on the country. Splashing in the large swimming pool for adults, complained to the sea, and found nothing, found nothing. A whiff of panic spread through him. Why was this so incredibly difficult? Why took it so long for him to find a decent answer? The blood roared in his ears.

What sees Hannibal in you then?

The hunger. He had seen hunger in Hannibal's eyes. This insatiable appetite for life. The desire to devour him. To bite his salty flesh and to drink his blood. Will’s breathing

quickened, noticed it only in passing.
What was this trembling that he had felt when he covered the back of Hannibal's hands with his mouth? Was that imagination in the end? A hallucination?

But eyes did not lie. Eyes never lied.

Chilton's hands wandered into deeper regions now including Will’s hips carefully. Like heated leather straps they joined around Will’s veiled skin. He almost choked.
Chilton smiled.

¨ Yes? ¨ he asked encouragingly. Will guessed that he feigned helpfulness. He considered. Deliberate feverishly. Meanwhile, the rain had gained strength, drop by drop was more like a flock of icy spears as a harmless water showers. Will was completely soaked down to the bare skin. He was shaking, but he did not care.

¨ He ... he sees me. How I really am. ¨

Chilton's smile died a little.

¨ Does that mean you wear a mask? A protection against us mere mortals? ¨ he asked. He did not mock. He spoke softly and somehow compassionate. Will wanted to believe this gentleness and compassion to be true. He really wanted to trust. But how could he, after all, what had happened before?

Will’s look hardened. He also removed Chilton's hands from his hips, stepped back a precautionary step, so that distance between them was formed. He stood there, cold, clammy, trembling and very, very quiet. Externally. He crossed his arms over his chest, digging his short cut fingernails in his upper arms and forgot to feel the pain.

¨ You don’t want to know what lies beyond. ¨ he said, and he meant it. Hannibal had brought him to reason that a beast lay in him. A beast with razor claws and ivory teeth and red red red eyes with no pupils. He had shown him the shelter and from time to time the psychatrist tried to lure it out of its burrow.

Chilton was catastrophatically unmoved.

¨ To know what I want and what I don’t want should remain my decision. ¨

¨ What **do** you want? ¨ Will snapped brusquely. His trained habits of social politeness got holes and Chilton stabbed through them with a lousy, nasty pin. He hated this feeling. And at that moment he hated Chilton that he typed him this feeling. That he typed his feelings in general.

¨ A patient named Will Graham. ¨ his opponent replied, hands sticking in the pockets of his pants. ¨ And later ... a friend named Will Graham, maybe. ¨ he added thoughtfully.

Wills anger at the psychiatrist behaved consistently, but his spontaneous hate subsided as quickly as it had come. Only the migraine didn’t stop. These hideous, ugly migraine.

¨ A friend? ¨ he repeated warily. Chilton nodded.

¨ Depending on what is more pleasant for you. ¨

¨ Or for you. ¨

This comment brought Will a shrug. He groaned and pressed two fingers on his right temple. ('Knock knock' - Who is there? Pain, baby, beautiful, fat headache. Say hello and give a kiss!)

¨ You are aware of your suicidal impulses, right? ¨ the profiler said.

Chilton clucked his tongue. ¨ In what way? ¨ he asked innocently. The rain had washed the gel out of his hair, now a few strains towered like hedgehog spines in the air. If Will was not in such bad mood by now, he might have laughed about it.

¨ I don't think Hannibal would agree to this arrangement. He doesn't like to share. ¨ he said wearily. ¨ He still feels responsible for me, more than ever to be honest. You are his colleague. Do you really want to be the one who stabs his back? ¨

Chilton looked at him stoically. Then sudden anger flared in his eyes and planted like a freshly lit fuse over his face away, turned it into a painting of rage.

¨ Pardon my language, but I basically give a shit if I hurt the complex minds of some colleagues with my actions. Honestly, I don't even **give a fuck** about it if thus the well of an interesting patient is at stake. *Your* well in that case, Will. It would be tragic if your recovery would be affected by someone who stands to you in such an intimate way.¨

¨ For a recovery first a disease is needed. ¨ Will said. He almost shouted. ¨ I'm not crazy, Frederick. I'm not! ¨ He did not even notice that he had called him by his first name for the first time this evening. He was too upset to notice.
That Frederick took with enthusiastic, mocking applause. A slow clapping, echoing from all corners and niches, filled the air and was accompanied by the wet smacking of rain.

¨ Excellent, Will, ¨ he said, ¨ then for God's sake, let me worry about that it stays that way. Let me **help** you! ¨

Will hesitated. He felt water running across his forehead in narrow streams, draped on his cheeks and clambered from his chin. The terrace bathed in bone-white glow when lightning heaved a crack in the concrete gray sky. Will heard the thunder five seconds before it and in the same moment his skull seemed to explode. He cried out; a choppy, feeble sound which sank in the rumble of thunder. Something grabbed him from behind. He stepped away from it instinctively, but it was not shaken off. It was warm and firm. And strong. Powerful. Godlike.

¨ Will. ¨

Immediately Will's thoughts to fight back to get away petrified in mid-motion.He looked closer. A tall figure stood before him, holding his wrist tightly while he put his free hand on

his shoulder. Another flash of lightning revealed Will his true face.

¨ Hannibal. ¨ he whispered, swallowing. Named stared at him with dark brown eyes. His gaze was indefinable, his face cleared of every emotion. The rain left wet rivulets on his skin, sticking a few strands of his hair neatly to the side parting them molded to his temple and forehead. His hands were massy as anvils on Will's body, but Will did not mind, not even speculated about freeing himself anymore. Finally, Hannibal broke their eye contact and turned to Chilton, who was still standing about a meter away from them.

¨ Dr. Chilton, what a coincidence to discover you with my dear Will here. ¨ he said. His voice seemed neutral, but underneath the silhouette it shimmered cold as ice. Colder than the rain. ¨ You're not going to poach my patients, are you? ¨

Chilton laughed. It was a contrived, rehearsed laugh Will realized without even having to turn around.

¨ How could I? ¨ he heard him ask. ¨ By such a conscientious guard? ¨

Hannibal ignored this jibe rigorously and gave Will his full attention again.

¨ Will, it's after midnight already. ¨ he said, his tone almost cheerful, his intention imploringly. ¨ I think it's time to go home, don't you think so too? ¨
He seemed to leave Will's miserable state willfully unmentioned. Maybe he would bother about an accusation for later, who knew. Only Hannibal himself.
Will found neither the strength nor the want to disagree with him on this point.

¨ Yes, you're right. ¨ he murmured as if he was in trance. The migraine was still there, but vanished after their recent bust - a rather dull throbbing, it shows bearable. ¨ It's time ... ¨

Hannibal nodded. Would he have tolerated a different answer? Maybe yes. Maybe no.

¨ Good. ¨ he said sympathetically. The smile that he presented was warm, but turned into a flowing contrary, as he viewed the head of prison psychiatry.

¨ Dr. Chilton? ¨

¨ Dr. Lecter. ¨ the other one replied mechanically. That was the only farewell, that was possible between them this time. Nevertheless Chilton still spoke to Will as if Hannibal was not there.

¨ Thank you for the dance, Will. You could work at your… pace. ¨

¨ I'd rather jump from the Niagara Falls - with a triple somersault. ¨ Will replied, but it was less quick-witted as it should be. Chilton remained silent. There was nothing more to talk about.
Without another word Hannibal went with Will to the glass door, directly into the hall. A hand keeping his backbone in a supportive manner.

When Will peeped fleetingly over his shoulder one last time, he saw Chilton motionless in the rain, hands shoved in his pockets and an unconcerned grin stretching his face.

The profiler turned his head back so fast that his wet hair clapped around his neck.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will is confused and tries to flee, tries to get away from Hannibal to clear his thoughts. But Hannibal isn't willing to let him go so easily...

Chapter Notes

Thank you very much for 5 kudos, 1 Bookmark and 3 subscribers! I hope you'll like this chapter as well :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The rain pattered with bony fingers on the car's windshield and talked in a monotonous rhythm, while Will silently stared out the window.

The landscape glided like a lazy wave of sea past them. He saw trees, whose leaves were plucked from their crowns from the violence of the storm, leaving bare branches behind. He saw a river that threatened to burst upon its mud coated shore, houses where few ghostly glow burned. He saw the shiny wet gravel of the highway Hannibal chose until he turned into a side street and the approached climes Will recognized without difficulty.

He saw everything, heard everything, felt everything without really perceiving.
To him it would have been indifferent, if the houses had suddenly stood in flames or an earthquake had forced a crack in the bottom crust, devouring a large number of cars parked in its depths. Since Hannibal and he had left the party and sat in the car, they had not spoken a single word to each other. No one began the first step of a conversation, so that the interior of the car was ruled by monotonous silence.

Sometimes Will was trying to whisper a word, to formulate a sentence against the invisible wall that he felt standing between them. But he could not bring himself to it. His courage deserted him as his migraine - completely and with frightening speed. His mouth was very dry, his breath heavy. He trembled almost imperceptibly, but dared not to close to lace of his jacket around his body, because he didn’t want under any circumstances that Hannibal noticed his state. The storm had soaked him down to the bare bones and he soon felt pieces of ice clash in his veins. He could almost see the paper umbrellas in a cocktail glass, although this was pure imagination of course.
Reluctantly he threw off a sideway glance to his psychiatrist. Hannibal’s eyes were uncompromisingly focused on the road ahead of them. His face had freed from the burden of

any emotion. A few strands of gray shimmered like silver lines in his ashblond hair. Not once did he return eye contact. Sometimes it seemed Will he would have even stopped blinking.

He sighed, then turned back to the dreary prospect entering the howling winds and the whipping water vapor. He had not done anything bad, right? Nothing had happenend between Frederick and him, so why should he be ashamed or even put to a pillory.

But the devil is in the details, right? Will thought to himself.

Frederick Chilton's lips suddenly came into his mind, crowded imperiously around his thoughts. They had looked soft. Shimmering in a pallet of pearl colors, but slightly bluish. The question of whether he should them warm up with a kiss or let them be... had he actually wanted do that?
Had he actually desired Frederick Chilton in that moment or he was just blinded by his appearance? The grudging, humorless approach of a smile hooked up in his mouth like a fish bait. His throat was bone dry and it hurt when he swallowed.
He is in the details repeated the quiet, sly, nasty voice in him and he agreed. God, he agreed with her multiple times, because it was the truth. Because he knew the truth. Not from what had really happened, but of what could have happened. What **would** have happened there under the treacherous cover of darkness and decadence.

That was why Will felt so damn miserable. And it became more unbearable with every meter they approached nearer to Hannibal's house. As if a red-hot horseshoe burned deeper into his chest millimeter by millimeter. Will did not think he would make it finally without to cry or to be otherwise abusive when they were first in the building, surrounded by furniture and objects and books and artifacts screaming the name of their owner, *Hannibal Lecter* into his pale face.

There was a turmoil which raged within him, the taste of nausea on his tongue and this fear, *this fear*. He clenched his icy fingers into fists. No, he could not stay with Hannibal. He could not even be with him in a car, in a room, let alone in the same bed. Not tonight.

It may be that he hated himself for it. It may be that he hated Dr. Chilton. But all these were only temporary phenomena, he knew. It did not help, though.

"Let me get out of here." it finally burst out of his mouth like the thunderbolt, which rode the moth black sky a breath later. His hands, pressed to his knees, shone in deathly pale color.

His head felt like dipped under water. He hated this iron front between them, these gratings, which included neither lock nor key. In general, Hannibal's presence. Had he been still yearned after his closeness, it seemed to him now almost to be the contrary. Although he had no doubt that his sudden revulsion had all alone to do with Frederick and his formative words, he did not blame him for his own reaction. And although he regretted his request as soon as he had uttered it, he did not take it back.
The stubbornness prevailed. Stubbornness and the unspeakable feeling of having committed an act of treason. (*To whom he has committed treason? Maybe to himself.*)

From the corner of his eye he noticed sporadically that Hannibal froze into a pillar of salt for

a second, but then turned his head vaguely in his direction and looked at him. Will did not look back. He wasn't able to. He believed that Hannibal's view would shred him.

¨Let you out? Why? ¨

Hannibal's hypnotic baritone was inspired by embracing peace. But for Will it could not hide the hint of forming hardness.
He nervously licked his lips. He was aware that he was playing with fire here. A sleek, beautiful, glowing fire. A fire with bloody flames and the scent of dispersed wine, but at that moment it didn't matter.
The need to rush out into the open and to throw himself in Hannibal's arms at the same time, risking a car accident seemed manic and endless and so tangible that he wanted to scream and be torn into two halves.

Instead, he cleared his throat, suppressed a cough that threatened to climb up his neck.
He felt not good. *Did he ever felt better ?*

"I'll take a taxi and go home. To my *other*home. Please, please let me." he said, almost pleading and thanked secretly that his voice didn't shiver.

Maybe it broke a bit at the end of his sentence a, but that was fine. That was fine, because it was inevitable, and he knew it.

Again the silence fell like a rotting bride veil hovering over the two men. Will heard nothing except the busily pouring rain drops and his eternal throbbing heart, the chug of his blood-rich veins.
Then a gentle jolt went through him and he shrank instinctively. He turned, craned his neck and looked through the windshield. Two minutes later he realized that Hannibal had brought the car to a stop and actually docked at a bus stop. An imperceptible wave of relief subsided through his whole body. He had feared that Hannibal would make it harder for him.

He was about to open the car door on his side, disappearing without another word, as he paused in the middle of movement. The bolt on which his sweaty fingers slid, was not turnable. He was able to shake it, as he wanted, but nothing stirred.
The car door did not open.
An ugly suspicion germinated in him, as he raised his head a little higher to inspect the edges of the window insistently. Two minutes later, his suspicion was confirmed - Hannibal had turned on the child lock. Will would have most likely hammered his head against a very robust brick wall in this moment, but that was just a pipe dream.
He would have been a fool, if he had deliberately risked a new migraine, where the first was subsided oh so fortunately.

"Will, do you seriously believe I would send you out into the middle of this infernal weather? Do you take me for such a crétin? ¨ he heard it unusual cutting behind him and Will slumped back into his seat like a rubber doll which had been pressed the air out of its valve.

How could he truly expect Hannibal would dismiss him from his care without any explanation?

He knew Hannibal Lecter – he had learned to know him amazingly well within just half a year - and it should not have actually surprised him that the psychatrist gave him the chance to escape just to shut down the open gate at the last moment.
That was kind of a little ironic to Will, although there was nothing to laugh and he did not want to laugh either. Chilton had awoken a sadness, a fear in him, he had not known until today that it slept behind his eyes.

Let's say, I would actually consider you to be a pet - which is not true. What does Hannibal see in you then?

“Will, be honest, why do you want to leave me in this storm and walk to your old house?”

Will looked at his knees.
It was only when he noticed coral crescents on the sensitive flesh of his palms, when he realized how hard he actually pressed his fingernails into his skin. His hands had already become so numb with cold that he did not perceive pain. It was the inner cold that ruled him. He wished for heat, someone who brought this cold in him to melt and Hannibal's arms always offered an open invitation ... he did not accept it.
You don’t deserve it. said the cunning voice now. *You deserve none of this* .

“I ... I miss my dogs.” he replied evasively. “They are afraid of thunder.”

A half-truth. His stray pack was never glad when a storm was brewing over them, which was why they, as soon as the first thunderbolt grazed the firmament, occupied Will’s bed like an army base. But they did this too, if Will was *not* present.
They needed his scent to donate them comfort - his body heat, however, was secondary.

Hannibal's brow welled in fine wrinkles. Will did not want to know, refused to look at him from the corner for his eye - but he did it anyway. He could not help it. He loved this face and every expression it painted. He loved it, even when bloodlust retraced the distinctive traits. Sometimes he was ashamed of it. Sometimes he just forgot it.
¨This is not the reason.¨ he heard Hannibal contradict him gently. No reproach. No judgment. Just an easy observation. Will pressed his lips together.

“Yes, it is.” he replied miserably and yes, that was a childish response but for God’s sake, what else could he say? At that moment his tongue was very difficult and his thinking very slow.

¨No.¨ Hannibal said simply. So simple that Will almost envied him.

The clicking of an opening belt echoed in the car. Then a gentle staccato growl of the seat, when Hannibal leaned back and crossed his legs, gallantly struck hands in his lap verschränkend. Will knew this attitude. It was solely intended and rehearsed for therapy sessions. Usually.
With a slight bout of irony, he thought that even Hannibal tended to habits and that his profession was no charade, but draped on his body. If it had ever served only as a second skin to conceal the true nature of Dr. Lecter, this was inextricably intertwined with the first layer during the years and so it had become a real part of him.

“Has your decision to do with Frederick? Has he done something to you? ¨

Hannibal's words were selected on an objective level, but only the formulation of his second question put Will a millstone in the stomach. A false innuendo, and next time he would see Frederick Chilton definitely in a modified form - for dinner, for example.

“No.” he replied immediately, too hastily perhaps, but he was taking no chances. “No, there has nothing happened, absolutely nothing! ¨

In his excitement he met Hannibal face to face and regretted it in the same second. Hannibal’s eyes devoured him in their dark swirls and for a fateful moment he forgot how massive the suction was in them.

“I believe you.” he said. “But I cannot answer for you to let you shoo on the sidewalk in such conditions. ¨ he nodded to the window on his side, which rolled the next rumble across the sky. “You're shaking like a leaf anyway. I don’t want you to get sick.¨

Will shook his head and swore secretly. So, he had noticed it. (*Of course, he has noticed it, you moron. EVERYONE would have noticed that!*)

“I'm not cold. I'm doing fine.¨

And he clung to this sentence like a shipwrecked sailor on a broken plank on the high seas.

“Will ...” Hannibal sighed. “It's ok to show weakness. You will never need to pretend anything in front of me. I'm here for you.¨

It was serious. Will knew that Hannibal had never played him in this particular case. He dropped his shoulders.

“I know.¨ he said, turning his gaze. “I'm sorry, I ... I'm just confused, that's all. Has to be champagne’s aftermath.”

It was true that he was confused. That it stemmed because of the sparkling wine, was a plump lie.
Hannibal looked at him expectantly. When it became clear that the profiler would not speak further, he smiled his scrawny ramified smile.

“There is nothing you have to say sorry for.¨ he said imploringly, leaned closer to Will. Hands found their way to the profiler’s cheeks, thumbs wandered over weak, heated skin. Will fell involuntarily into this contact. The heat radiating from the other man enveloped his thoughts, lulled him. “But it is me who has to plead for forgiveness .”

“What? ¨ Will asked perplexed.

He had expected many things, but not that.
Hannibal looked at him. Enquiring? Appraising? None of that. Thoughtful, perhaps. Pensive

and melancholy somehow ...? Will did not have the necessary time to speculate. Hannibal did not give him time.

“I left you to your own devices.¨ he explained supportively, not a second of it draining. “That was very inconsiderate and rude of me, especially since receptions like this are contrary and you only endured this opera because of me.” True regret welled in his eyes. Like a shadow on a cave wall. “Forgive me my carelessness. It will not happen again. I promise you, my dear.¨

He moved a hand to put Will some individual, wet strains of hair from his forehead, arranged them with meticulous diligence behind his ear. Overwhelmed Will closed his eyes while Hannibal’s finger ghosted across his forehead and paused abruptly.
Suddenly, the psychiatrist was very near at his side.

These hands have people struck down like cattle, slaughtered, eviscerated and then served as a dinner with wine and brittle. And now… they adjust my tie.

“Hannibal ...” he said softly, as he was in a dream.
This man's presence was of captivating nature. Like so many times before he had to admit he was attracted to it. Despite the cannibalistic aspect he admired and longed for his strength, his resistance, his almost innate sense of perfect control, and yes, even his predatory behavior, the crouched animal behind the graceful facade of an eternal gentleman.

“You have fever, Will.¨ it whispered next to his ear. The rough baritone breathed against the sensitive flesh and made him shiver in its foundations. “I think your dogs can spare you for a night .“

“Already ten nights in a row.¨ Will muttered, but in reality he already knew that his rebellion would serve no purpose. Hannibal Lecter held him literally *in his hands*. He would not go. There was no reason to do so. Why should he voluntarily return to the solitude he had left in his own house along with his dogs?
Suddenly his own idea appeared to him completely harebrained, even if the discomfort deep in his soul remained steadfast. It stayed and stayed and ...

Hannibal did a dismissive gesture.

“An eleventh will not harm them.¨ he said promptly.

Will shook his head. However, a gentle tremor had captured his limbs. He felt weak, disillusioned, cooled and completely emaciated.
Like a drug addict in rehab, he thought to himself, and if he would have been capable of doing, he had chuckled probably.

“Hannibal, I really can’t ... ¨ he began, but was rudely interrupted by Hannibal, which was not his style otherwise.

“Will, do you want to punish me? ¨ he asked with a hard undertone and Will winced as he had just revealed to him, he would remove his cecum.

“P-Punishment? For what? “ he stammered. His cheeks were burning hot, not originated by fever this time. The psychiatrist sighed.

“For my ignorant behaviour.¨

“This is no punishment.¨

“It is for me.” Hannibal replied and he sounded honestly hurt. “The thought of not knowing you by my side tonight sickens me. What if something happens to you? You're not in the constitution to be alone and dog paws can’t call the emergency.¨

Will wanted something to say to that, but he was brought to silence by Hannibal's mouth quickly.
It was a rabid kiss that had a hungry, devouring note. Soon the exquisite bouqet of red wine and various Horsd'œuvre flooded Will’s tongue, mixed with the resinous, voluptuous scent that Hannibal encountered and a splash of a noble aftershave. A noise, levitating to a short, gracious moment unmolested Will’s senses in higher hemispheres and unparalleled sought.

When they broke from each other after a random amount of time , their breath steamed in the air. The windows were painted with a thin layer of fog. Arising, Hannibal leaned Will back in the depths of his seat. His head swam and he gasped for oxygen.

Hannibal looked at him immensely loving. At the same time a triumphant nuance flashed in his maroon iris.

"You stay with me, no argument. I'll take care of you." he breathed against the slightly swollen lips.

Will nodded nervously. He looked double.

Chapter End Notes

Any comments to this? I'd really love to hear your opinions /3

Last chapter is in work!

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal and Will at home. Light and heavy dialogue plus kisses. Do I have to say more?

Carelessly, Will leaned into the partial shade the door frame afforded and watched under heavy lids how Hannibal was busy fiddling in the kitchen.

Listless he blew a wet, curly hair from his forehead, beads of water ran down his neck and fell on his maltreated nerves. He never took his eyes from the psychiatrist.
¨Take a hot shower.¨ Hannibal had advised him as soon as they went into the house ¨In the meantime, I'll make you a soup.¨
Will had, albeit with sporadic grumbling, obeyed, and now, half an hour later, significantly warmed and hatched in casual clothes, he based his dubious sentries on the border between kitchen and living room area. Hannibal had told him to lie down on the couch near the fireplace and rest, but Will did not even think about it.
He was a grown man, not a minor child who was sent to bed as soon as the suspected mumps or measles arose.

So he did the only thing that seemed interesting and remarkable in his current location – afford Hannibal some company while he preached his culinary arts.

The psychiatrist had got rid of his jacket, gathering up the sleeves of his bordeaux red shirt to the elbows, so that Will could see swelling muscle strands beneath the cream-colored skin with any grip he made. They disappeared in the blink of an eye but still it was a marvellous sight.
Hannibal held a proportionally small, sharp knife in his hand and chopped a ginger tuber into tiny slices. His whole body seemed to be involved in this act for his gaze was immobile and highly concentrated. A few strands of hair hung between his eyes, but he either did not notice it or ignored them intentionally. His lips were pressed into a full, rose-colored bar, reminded of the features of an ancient Roman sculpture. Striking and hard as marble rock. Somehow inhumanly perfect.

A few feet away from him a pot of steaming liquid bubbled contently such as Will interpreted the gurgling sound. On the tabletop spread different oriental spices and herbs, a colorful palette of exotic powder crumbs that Will strongly compared to the fanned tail feathers of a peacock. It looked as if Hannibal made a three-course meal instead of a simple dish.
Will sighed inwardly. Sometimes he was really trying to shake his head in horrification, exaggerated by Hannibal's huge expenses.
It was already one in the morning and despite this ungodly hour, the psychiatrist actually

wore an apron, revived the stove and cooked him chicken soup (at least Will called it so because he wasn't able to remember the complicated name Hannibal had used for it - at this point his mind was a very simple knitted construct.).

Will had noticed during last weeks that Hannibal slept through no single night. He preferred three-hour, maximum four-hour recovery periods, falling into a deathlike state of rest, but was instantly awake when Will wanted to steal out of bed secretly (which often was extremely embarrassing, for he was a man like any other and when he had to follow the call of nature, then ... well, then he had to go to the bathroom and it wasn't particularly edifying, that two-heeled, brown eyes focused his backside all the way down.).
His senses seemed sharpened without ceasing and were always receptive to the smallest disturbance the atmosphere held. At least Will was convinced that they would never need to worry about an electrical alarm system, if uninvited intruders should break into the house. Hannibal would either hear or smell them coming... and make short, tasty work out of them.

Some people just wanted to challenge their fate.

The thought of it led Will to an unwitting smile. His reaction proved more than anything else how deep he had already sunk in the darkness, Hannibal led him through, drowning him deeper in moonlit water.
Strangely the profiler felt, however, reasonably well in this moment. The shower's sparkling water jet had relaxed his tense muscles and deprived him of the external cold, even if the inner counterpart stayed unchanged.
To be true, getting rid of his uncomfortable suit was a personal blessing and he was glad about wearing sweatpants and an ordinary cotton shirt. Even grateful.

If one had seriously asked him in this second whether he was blessed or cursed with Hannibal, this man, this monster, this devil wrapped in meat and bones he would have shrugged his shoulders and said *both* noncholantly. And there would have been no better answer to it than this.

A scraping echoed through the air as Hannibal knocked the ginger slices on the wood plate and sprinkled them into the boiling water brew.
He stirred it twice before he turned and cleaned the leek inside the sink. He broached it then. Will watched the destruction of this vegetable in silence until a sudden inspiration advised him to escape the door frame and reach out to the man who turned his broad back on him as ever. He knew that Hannibal heard his approaching presence, and if not, he smelled it, but the psychiatrist remained motionless as Will embraced him from behind and his hands stroked over his abdomen. His fingers soon clamped onto the shirt.

The profiler let his chin rest on Hannibal's shoulder as he peered down silently on the knife, how he held it, waved it with outrageously casual dexterity. He did this a little while. None of them spoke.
The only noises around them were the snip-snap of the sharpened knife blade and the roaring water pot.

"Are you mad at me?" Will asked quietly, as he could no longer bear his own impatience.

Even now Hannibal didn't turn around, remained innocently in place, blithely decomposing the leeks into pieces.

"Do I have a reason to do so? ¨ he asked simply. His tone was indefinable.

In response, Will pulled the immaculately-off shirt collar slightly to the side with his teeth, buried his face in the crook of Hannibal's unprotected neck and inhaled the scent of the other man deeply.
The after-shave had completely lost its effect but was generously replaced by the battalion of spices, Hannibal had taken from his inexhaustible stores. Will smelled curry and nutmeg, coriander and subtle demonic hot chili, the tart sweetness of fennel seeds and slightly sour lemon grass.
It reminded him of the Far East, the tropical climate, the icy flow of the rivers and snow painted on the roughness of mountain chains that all tourists swarmed up to. He had never left the American continent and also had no intention to, but he believed Hannibal would take him to a culinary safari at least. He thought about how many years they were granted to eat in front of each other, sleep in the same bed, kiss and hold onto in darkness.

¨Maybe.¨ he murmured into the smooth skin, searched with his half-open mouth after the pulsating carotid artery, marking the tangled path of his lips placing ghostly butterfly kisses on the warm skin.
After he had found it he licked teasingly over the burning spot like he'd suck at a particularly sweet fruit. His action was not without consequences. Although it took some time to make Hannibal surrender - when he lay the kitchen knife beside him and wiped his wet hands meticulously with a cloth, Will knew that he had gained the attention of the psychiatrist completely. He was proud.

To some extent, the knowledge flattered him to be able to seduce Hannibal, even let him forget his cooking for a few precious moments. However, he also knew that he had challenged the look Hannibal gave him now, as he turned to him.
The bright, electric light gleamed like fresh fireplace ash in the maroon iris, inevitably linked with his. Will could bear prolonged eye contact conceivable rare because it unsettled him and then he felt incredible lack of place. However, Hannibal's eyes were like a fire in the late winter morning when the snow flowed in thick flakes from the steel gray sky and the faces of the dead reflected on icy lake surfaces. Or an active volcano crater, on which edges the magma gurgled noisily and gnashing.

He was fascinated by them and like multiple times before, he was captivated in the psychatrist's gaze.
Did he like it? The feeling of being tied up, bandaged like a mummy of ancient Egypt? Perhaps he had hated it earlier. Maybe he had even abhorred it once fervently. But that belonged to his past. When he couldn't even take into account that playability benefits earned him such a restraint.
Since their very first meeting Hannibal Lecter had been looking forward to liberate Will's psyche of its social airs and graces, to reveal the raw savagery of his own existence only to subdue him shortly afterwards. But the psychiatrist had ignored a decisive factor - Also Will himself was able to exert some power on him. Not the power that one needs to capture a rabid predator successfully in its cage and swallow the key, but definitely the power (or rather

the gift) to appease its growling.

Not the power to shape the monster's fangs but definitely the strength to give his wrath a tamer pace. Both held a very specific, manipulative component to it. In their relationship they played with feelings, with gestures, with their bodies, with each other's mind. It was an edifying game, unless you weren't overly exaggerated and careful not to push the partner to a limit that he was not allowed to transgress. Will knew he had reached such a limit now and it annoyed him that not Hannibal but Frederick Chilton had led him on this edge.
He pressed his lips a little too harsh against Hannibal's neck and his teeth flashed out, biting there and there.
A few of these marks were raised coral red on the toned skin and some of them would certainly give birth to purple bruises soon after. Hannibal estimated such evidence as love (he called them jewelry of skin), but usually it was he covering Will's body and neck with this teeth, dabbing his exposed flesh similar to a leopard skin.
Will stopped maltreating Hannibal's throat when the psychatrist put his hands on his cheeks. He directed him to his lips, gently pulling him into a lazy kiss bribed with intensity and overwhelming heat.
Will tasted a pinch of pepper on Hannibal's gourmet tongue, while it pushed into his mouth. Or was it cinnamon? Or something else entirely? He did not know. He only knew he was afraid to lose himself in the tumult of sensations and temperature fluctuations postulating his body. Silencing dizziness washed over him, but before he slumped to the ground Hannibal wrapped an arm around his waist like an iron vise while the other supported his back. He pressed Will's body firmly to his own as he wanted them to melt into one being.

"Don't be too good. Otherwise you won't ever get rid of me.¨ Will murmured, gasping for air after they broke the kiss .

Hannibal replied his warning with a gentle kiss on the corner of his mouth.

"That's exactly what I try to imply.¨ he said softly and Will couldn't tell whether his words were meant jokingly or seriously. "Am I successful? ¨

¨Very.¨

The profiler threw a quick glance at the soup pot.

"This work isn't necessary. Really. Hand me an aspirin and I'll be fine.¨ he said apologetically.

Hannibal showed a thin smile.

"You're my mate.¨ he explained in simple gratitude, sliding with his thumb tip almost tenderly over Will's lush lips. They showed an obscene shade of red by now. "It's my immovable right to cook for you and I gladly take every opportunity for it.¨.

Will looked at him but didn't smile back.
"Mate ..." he echoed. He wrung the letters from his mouth like a towel drowned in soapy water. *Mate*. It sounded strange in his ears. Hearing it made him think of bestial creatures of

the wilderness and meticulous selection. Not necessarily what he used to get in touch with Hannibal mentally.
Well, except for the animal-like creature, perhaps. The Wendigo still visited him in his dreams, although he Hannibal gourmet forays in the picture was long ... Hannibal interrupted his thoughts by leaving collide with each other tenderly her forehead.
The expression in his eyes was unfathomable and dark as the bottom of the Dead Sea.

“Don’t like the term? ¨ he asked. He seemed amused.

“Well, ... yes, but...¨ Will bowed his eyelids, until only two slim slots flickering cobalt blue were visible. “It's just funny to hear it from your lips.”

“So? ¨

Hannibal's breath was warm and salty and tangy as a summer breeze in Tuscany and held a shallow laughter hidden.

“Why? ¨.

“Because it somehow still seems strange if you say such things to me or give me such a ... title. I mean, what follows next? Companion, darling, *honeybeam*? I don’t think I could ever get used to it. It sounds kind of possessive.¨
As he spoke, he had tangled with each additional word in its own records so that the last syllables gushed like fountains from his vocal cords. A thieving redness had crept his cheeks. Hannibal took it with a smile.
“You may get used to it.¨ he said firmly. “And you will.¨
It surely should not sound like a threat. But for Will it did. A gentle threat.

He sighed. Then he looked at the psychiatrist with a mixture of curiosity and regret.

“Let's say, I would actually consider you as a pet - which is not true. Then what does Hannibal see in you then?”

“Hannibal?” He cleared his throat, as his mouth was suddenly incredibly dry and scratchy. “What ... what am I to you? ¨

Hannibal raised an eyebrow.

“Didn’t I just say that? ¨ he asked in mild surprise, but also a bit reproachful. “Will, you'd better listen when someone speaks to you.”
Will did not respond. Instead, he slipped out a bit from Hannibal so that their forehead no longer touched. Also their mouths won a more moral distance. Hannibal’s lips were like poison for Will. Sweet, dizzy poison.
The mouth of his opponent fell down rapidly. He looked unsatisfied but said nothing. (Not yet). The profiler took a deep breath. His hands ran down over Hannibal's chest like water, feeling the firm flesh and muscles below.

There was nothing perverted here, no craving, no sexual need. Merely the desire for

exploration, for an anchor on the high seas to hold on to. Will stopped moving his hands when he felt Hannibal's heart beat underneath him. The pulse pounded with surprising vehemence against his palms and suddenly it was Will as its rhythm would connect with his breathing, maybe even converge. Like two bodies sharing a single heart... the thought bit his memory so brutally it felt as if a hail of glass shards stumbled over his shoulder blades.

"For Frederick Chilton I'm a madman.¨ he said. "A fascinating patient who would ignite a lot of global interest and fame, he could publish a whole study on my brain and my visions. He is attracted by the commerce and worldly success, although he claims otherwise. How about you? You're a psychiatrist and a cannibal. Am I your problem case of the century or the Christmas dessert? ¨

No sooner had the last syllables rolled off his tongue, perfect silence spread in the room. Even the water seemed to be scared to simmer louder.
Hannibal's face was cured as in resin, sealed and somehow ... prepared. Lifeless. Loveless. empty.
Have I ever experienced Hannibal angry? Will asked himself abruptly. *Did I ever see him cry? Seen as he falls into madness? As he overturns tables, decorates the carpet with plate shards as it is propagated in Spanish dramas?*
The answer to all these questions was a simple **no**. And paradoxically Will didn't feel comfortable about it.
He felt the arms that enveloped his body. When he wanted to elude them tentatively, they moved no single inch away. They would not let him go. Didn't want to give him away.
Will swallowed.

"Hannibal? ¨ His voice was as hesitant as he had hoped. "Hannibal, are you mad at me now? ¨

It should be a joke, but neither of them laughed.

The mention of his name seemed to retrieve the psychiatrist in the present again. He blinked. Once, twice. The third time he looked at Will. Long and thoughtful.

"I guess, Frederick has sown doubt about my intentions while you had your little chat in the rain. It just surprises me that it may retract harvest so quickly.¨ he said finally.
And he had deceived the profiler with the perfectly smooth baritone, the bitter component would not be passed out like a red wine stain on a garnished with fabric lace Tischdeckchen.

"No, the doubts were already put in the ground. He only germinated them.¨ Will replied.

"Do you believe rather him than me? ¨

It sounded offended.

Will turned his head slightly to the side, as Hannibal's lips wanted to catch his again. (Maybe this time to bite him.)

"Sometimes I don't know what I should believe at all.¨ he answered honestly and it was a fact

he probably internalized since the first meeting with Dr. Lecter.
Two fingers wrapped around his chin and forced him to look up again. Reluctantly, Will followed the command and fell prey to the burning sanguin. Behind them the water pot spat worryingly high splashes into the air and clapped flippantly onto the onyx black stove. Hannibal gave no attention to it.

“Believe in what is between uns.¨ he said factually. Will sighed.

“And what is this between us? ¨ he asked.

There it was again, this existential fear, making his stomach rotate in loops. Hannibal raised his lips to a failed crescent.

“It’s for eternity.¨ he answered imploringly. “You may doubt everything, but never my intentions towards you. They are pure. They are strong. And they are always faithful.¨

“Are they anemic? ¨Willasked.

Hannibal cocked his head.

"This I cannot promise. You know it, know what I am."

His face turned into an act of distress, but Will knew Hannibal was only distressed because he did not meet Will's expectations here and therefore had to disappoint him.
That blood would flow didn't trouble him for a single breath.
The profiler snorted. He did not know if he should be relieved about this confession or even more worried. The fear in him had waned a bit.

“I don’t doubt what you are or who you are, Hannibal.¨ he said finally, decided that he should put these thoughts ad acta for once. “I doubt ... myself.¨

Hannibal lowered his shoulders. He seemed a little mollified. A fact so Will thought, would volatilize with security, Profiler his lips apart first brought to unveil the disastrous night’s last measly detail.

“Why? ¨ the psychiatrist asked quietly.

“I thought about kissing Frederick. Just for a brief moment, two seconds perhaps, but I thought about it. Says nothing good about our current state, right? ¨

It was out. Freed. Will felt as if he had pelted the psychiatrist with firecrackers.

Hannibal looked at him.

“You didn’t kiss him.¨

It was a statement, not a question. Will stared at his feet. Minutes passed. He heard the clock ticking her mechanical ticking in the background .

¨No.¨ he answered. Hannibal looked at him with varying interests.

“Why not? ¨

Each letter was carefully chosen.
Will licked his chapped lips.

“Because I want to kiss *you*.¨ he replied. “And when I kiss Frederick, I think that I'll never kiss you again, and when I think about that I get sick.¨ He exhaled slowly. “I don’t want to cheat on you, you man-eating bastard - I want to spend my life with you, preferably in front and not *on* the dinner plate. Is this really too much to ask? ¨.

This time Hannibal stared at him in irritation, with wide eyes. Will suffered, enjoyed it, threw it down. And waited. Hoped that it was worth the wait.

¨Oh.¨ said the psychiatrist after what felt like an eternity. Then, after a pause, again. ¨Oh.¨.

Will frowned. Such a reaction was not typical of Hannibal. He would have excepted a more eloquent reply.

“*Oh*!? ¨ he hissed piqued. “That’s all you have to say about this? *Oh*!? ¨

He admitted it, he was disappointed. Especially since he realized the importance of severity as well as the horrific truth of his own statements just now.

Hannibal did not answer. Instead, he still seemed to be paralyzed mentally, arms behind Will's back. Will asked himself dumbly if anyone had ever talked so straightforward to Hannibal before. although **he** knew exactly what kind of favorite meat he took between his teeth.
And of course he couldn’t remember anyone who called Dr. Lecter a bastard and survived the next day, let alone the next week ...

Well, he had not seriously taken his anger to be polite and he doubted he could quarrel (which would certainly occur sometime, for each pair clashed there and then that was inevitable) without curses and other unsightly phrases.

However, suddenly Hannibal did something that washed away all his doubts and imaginary excuses - He hugged him. Tightly and needy.

Their bodies clung together like parts of a puzzle, their chests collided. Will felt Hannibal's heart hammering against his own and the psychiatrist’s lips kissing the delicately sensitive spots his collarbone offered.

Each fiber petrified under his skin. A cocoon of flesh, fabric rustling and human heat enveloping, grabbed him, drove oxygen from his lungs and the blood from his cheeks.
He gasped, but so quietly that he hoped the psychiatrist would not hear it (which honestly was a fruitless hope). After a few seconds in which he excepted Hannibal's steady breath

hitting against his covered up bones, the hot water jumped in its steel prison and the clock's mechanical innards rubbed together, he slowly, almost insidiously, relaxed.

His hands trembled as they climbed over the waist of his opponent, running them up to his broad shoulders and clasped around his neck. Single finger tips clung in a neatly combed head of hair, almost desperate. An exciting breath swirled his perception, let them be sharper. Susceptible.
It was one of those rare moments where Will Graham gave himself completely and without limitation into the touch of another person. Somehow this embrace seemed more intimate to him than any kiss they had exchanged within the last month and he received the change in Hannibal's demeanor like a squire, who waited on his knees in front of the king's throne receiving the accolade.
And he realized something fundamental. His reasoning, why he hadn't kissed Frederick Chilton, was not quite right. It was patchy.

In fact, he couldn't bear to disappoint Hannibal, betraying him in such a manner. He refused to risk not being able to fulfill the expectations that this man put in him. He wanted to prove a murderer and psychopath his worth, and he wasn't ashamed about it. Not anymore. Was he crazy in this sense? Fraught with an irreparable brain? Maybe even insane? Yes, probably. But Hannibal Lecter was it too then. And this thought, this knowledge gave Will the comfort he needed to accept a degree that made their relationship be clear and outbalanced. Possible.

The fear in his stomach had, however, laid to rest quietly. It would come to the surface again, this was no question, but it had retired for the day so Will didn't thoughtcalmed tremendously.

A little later found Hannibal cleared his throat and spoke again. Something in his tone seemed broken or cracked. Will preferred to ignore this. He didn't want to challenge Hannibal any further than he already had.

¨Will.¨ he said. "Would you consider to leave this man-eating bastard alone in the kitchen? Otherwise the soup will never be ready, I fear.¨

He avoided eye contact, which was unusual. Almost as if it would be unpleasant to him.

"Hm, does your madman distract you too much from cooking?" Will asked in gentle mockery.

Hannibal ended her embrace without answer, went to the water pot and finally released it from its steaming, overflowing pain. The tormented stove was probably just as grateful.

"He's stubborn." he said as he'd need to confirm the analysis.

"You like it when I'm stubborn."

"Occassionally."

"Liar."

For this Hannibal had no answer.
Will stuffed his hands in his pockets. He bit his lower lip as he remembered something that still gave him slight migraine. *The last brick in the wall*, as the saying was. One of the premonitions Chilton had unleashed on him.

“You know, I loved Alana Bloom once.¨ he began incoherently. “I put my heart to her feet and she trampled over it as if it were a fresh polished parquet floor and she a tap dancer. What will your love do? Will it also trample over me sooner or later? ¨

“What makes you think just getting to such questions? Champagne really doesn’t gut.¨ you

It was an added lax, repellent joke, but Will took it not amiss. He feared to have crossed a line with his previous opening of the Hannibal himself had not known until a few moments ago that they existed.

“It’s not the champagne.¨ he merely meant. “I want to prepare myself to the case, if there should be one. This is alles.¨

“You will only fall one more time, Will.¨

“And where? In your freezer? ¨

“In my arms.¨ He said it with such equanimity, as he would read the results of a blood test. “And possibly on the couch, as I recommended you to half an hour ago.”

“Forty minutes. And you didn’t recommend it, you *reminded* me of it.¨ Will told him with an innocent smile, then lifted up his hands disarmingly before Hannibal felt compelled to counterattack. “All right, I’ll go to the living-room then.¨

He pushed himself away from the kitchen counter and moved shuffling toward the corridor as he paused in his movement.

“Oh, before I forget, Hannibal? ¨

Hannibal did not even look up. The leeks seemed more important. *Snip-snap*.

“Yes? ¨ he said.

Will smiled.

“Hannibal Lecter.¨

Hannibal frowned.

“Yes, this is my name.¨ he said cautiously. ”Your point? ¨

“Hannibal Lecter. Hannibal ... ¨ the profiler enjoyably clucked his tongue. ¨ ... Will Lecter.

William Lecter.¨ he said reverently, extended his name intentionally in a lush sounding length.
He grinned from ear to ear as he realized that Hannibal's knife hovered motionless in the atmosphere, the view of its owner fixed at him.

"Hannibal and William Lecter - Well, how does that sound to you?"

Was he wrong or did Hannibal's facial features derail for a few inches?

"According to the soup - take your time, honey. I'm doing a lot better now.¨

With these final words, Will fled from the kitchen without turning a single time around.

Although he heard a metallic clang as the knife fell from Hannibal's hand and heard something one would have referred to as 'swearing'. Hannibal mumbling "fuck!" was still funny as hell.

Only when he arrived in the living room and had made himself comfortable on the couch, he allowed to cover his face with a pillow to silent his laughter. And his diaphragm hurt while having the amusing knowledge he had probably brought Hannibal Lecter, murderer, cannibal and psychopath the shock of his life.

He could get used to the word *Mate* if he needed to. A memorable term in the psychiatrist's dignified vocabulary. No problem.

Husband, however, was a term Hannibal wouldn't bring upon his lips that easily.

But Will urged him to nothing. They had time after all.

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